Cal Grant
Grade Point Average (GPA)
Questions and Answers
for High Schools

Why does the Commission require a Social Security number for a GPA verification?

Cal Grant statutes require the Commission to evaluate the financial need of an applicant by using Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) financial information and determine academic merit by evaluation of the student's grade point average. These two separately submitted documents are matched using the applicant's Social Security number. Currently, there is no other unique identifier that allows the Commission to match these records. Therefore, please ensure that GPA verifications submitted through the Commission's secure Website, or certified on the GPA Verification Form, have a valid Social Security number. If students don't have a Social Security number, they should address and resolve this potential problem in sufficient time to meet the Commission's March 2nd filing deadline.

Who can submit and certify a GPA?

GPAs may be certified and submitted by authorized representatives of any high school that is accredited by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) or by schools that have a University of California-approved course list. If a high school is not in the WASC region, accreditation by another regional accrediting agency is acceptable.

Whose GPAs should be submitted?

The Commission urges high schools to submit GPAs for their entire graduating senior class. Schools with year-round programs should ensure that their counseling programs and financial aid awareness programs address the needs of students not in attendance during the application periods.

Since students may apply for high school Cal Grant Entitlement awards within 18 months of graduation, schools are encouraged to submit GPAs for those students who graduated the previous year as well.

How can GPAs be submitted?

The most efficient way to submit GPAs is by using the Commission's secure web-based program called WebGrants. The WebGrants GPA upload function provides immediate feedback to the user about GPA records that have been accepted and identifies any problems with the records during the upload. WebGrants users may certify to a single GPA record or several records per submission.

Submitting the GPA electronically eliminates the need to mail a paper GPA Verification Form to the Commission. Schools and students may continue to submit verified paper GPA Verification Forms.

How are GPAs calculated?

Calculate the GPA on a 4.00 scale computed to two decimal places (between 0.00 and 4.00). Do not use a weighted scale. Convert any grades with extra weighting for honors and advanced placement classes to a 4.00 scale before calculating the GPA. Include all coursework for the sophomore year, the summer following the sophomore year, the junior year and the summer following the junior year in the calculation.

For high school graduates who apply after the senior year, a high school GPA includes senior year coursework. Do not include grades from physical education, Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) and remedial coursework. Remedial coursework is defined as any course that is not counted toward high school graduation.

What if applicants don't have a GPA, or attended a high school not eligible to verify a GPA, or have a GPA that is more than five years old?

An applicant who does not have a GPA or whose GPA is more than 5 years old, may submit a test score from the General Educational Development Test (GED), the American College Test (ACT) or the

Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT I) to be considered for a Cal Grant award.

A student who attended a high school that had neither WASC accreditation nor an approved University of California-approved course list, must submit a GED, ACT, or SAT I test score to be considered for a Cal Grant award.

If a test score will be submitted in lieu of a verified GPA, the student must take the test early enough to submit the results on or before the March 2nd postmark deadline. A signed GPA Verification Form with the student's Social Security number must be attached when submitting test scores. This will assure the test scores are used as an academic qualifier.

Is High School Graduation Required for Cal Grant Program Participation?

High school graduation, or its equivalent, is required for Entitlement Cal Grant program participation. Competitive Cal Grants do not require high school graduation. For those students who did not complete high school graduation requirements, the Commission can use the GED test date or the California High School Proficiency Examination (CHSPE) test date as equivalent to the date of high school graduation.

Although the CHSPE can be used as evidence of the equivalence of high school graduation, the Commission will not accept CHSPE results for use as an academic qualifier. Students who took the CHSPE to qualify to leave high school must submit a GPA or other academic qualifier to meet the Cal Grant academic qualifier requirement.

Can a GPA be certified for a student who has not passed the California High School Exit Examination (CAHSEE)?

High school graduation, or its equivalent, is required for Cal Grant Entitlement program participation. A public high school student who did not pass the CAHSEE exam and was required to do so cannot receive consideration for an Entitlement program award. His or her GPA is still valid for Cal Grant Competitive program consideration.

When should schools submit GPAs?

For the March 2nd deadline, the Commission begins accepting GPAs in mid-October and urges schools to report grade point average verifications as soon as possible.

Do I need to resubmit GPAs for the September 2nd Competition?

The September 2nd deadline is used to select Competitive Cal Grants for students attending a California Community College. Students who were not awarded during the Commission's March 2nd cycle may compete for an award during the September cycle.

All GPAs received for the March 2nd deadline will be carried over for inclusion in the September competition. If the student's GPA has changed as a result of senior year coursework, the new GPA should be certified and submitted.

What is the deadline when the filing deadline falls on a Saturday, Sunday or Holiday?

The statutory Cal Grant filing deadlines are March 2nd and September 2nd of the award year. When March 2nd or September 2nd falls on a Saturday, Sunday or holiday, GPAs and FAFSAs postmarked or filed electronically on the next business day are legally acceptable.

When will students be notified of awards?

The Commission will begin notifying students of their Entitlement awards in late-January. The timing of these notifications is driven by:

- The Commission's receipt of an electronic file from the federal FAFSA processor; and,
- Receipt of a verified grade point average.

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